# Mill Canyon Dinosaur Trail—Driving Directions

### Access

To reach the Mill Canyon Dinosaur Trail, drive 15 miles north of Moab on U.S. Highway 191. Turn left onto a dirt road (marked "Mill Canyon"). This road is just north of highway milepost 141. Be careful when crossing the train tracks. Proceed 0.6 miles on this dirt road to a "Y" intersection. Turn left at this point; go 0.5 miles to another intersection. Turn right here. The Mill Canyon Dinosaur Trail is 0.6 miles away along this route. At the trailhead, you will find a parking area and interpretive signs both at the parking area and along the trail itself. This is a short interpretive trail.

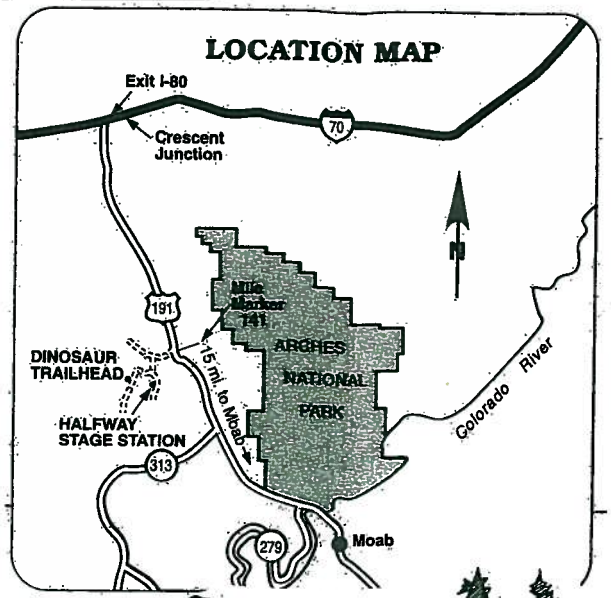
### General Overview

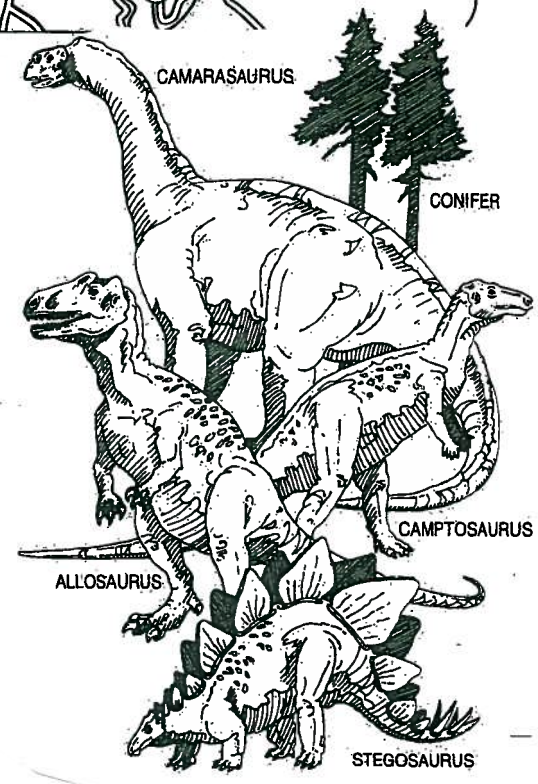
The dry climate and eroded landscape seen here today are very different from the environment that existed when dinosaurs roamed southern Utah. Most of the rocks in Mill Canyon are of Jurassic age. Jurassic rocks are exposed over wide areas in eastern and southern Utah, and their multicolored layers make a scenic wonderland. The rock formations in the region include Wingate Sandstone, the Kayenta Formation, Navajo Sandstone, and Entrada Sandstone, form which the majestic arches of Arches National Park are formed.

The Mill Canyon Dinosaur Trail is situated in the Late Jurassic-age Morrison Formation. This is a complex series of clays, shales, and sandstones that settled in the rivers and floodplains, ponds, lakes, swamps, and bogs of a broad low-lying plain existing 150 million years ago. During that time, the land from what is now New Mexico up to Canada, and from western Utah to Kansas, was essentially flat and was much closer to sea level than today's landscape.

The Morrison Formation contains the fossil remains of plants, invertebrates, and numerous kinds of dinosaurs, including Allosaurus, Stegosaurus, and Apatosaurus. There were also fish, crocodiles, turtles, lizards, mammals, salamanders, and frogs. The climate of the time was warmer than today, and temperatures probably rarely got below freezing, even in the winter. (This is why crocodiles could live as far northern Montana.) Cycads, ginkgoes, and conifers formed lush forests, shading an undergrowth composed largely of ferns. Horsetails grew abundantly in swamps and long rivers.

The Mill Canyon Dinosaur Trail takes you along a sand stone rock outcropping that represents an ancient gravelly river channel. This river lowed through what is now eastern Utah 150 million years ago, out of mountains that ere locate dot the west and south. The river flowed across the Morrison floodplain, carrying sand and rolling rounded rock pebbles downstream and also burying the bones of dinosaurs that had been caught in the river's currents. Dinosaur types that have been identified at the Mill Canyon site include Allosaurus, Stegosaurus, Camptosaurus, and Camarasaurus.



**Allosaurus**

Allosaurus was a large meat-eating dinosaur and was by far the most common of the ten known carnivorous dinosaurs of the Morrison Formation. Allosaurus was heavily built, with powerful hind legs, strong forearms with three large claws on each hand, and a large skull with many sharp, serrated teeth. The animal grew to a length of nearly 30 feet and weighed between one and two tons as an adult .

**Stegosaurus**

Stegosaurus was a moderately large plant-eating dinosaur, characterized by a double row of large, alternately-spaced plates that ran down its back. Stegosaurus had four spikes at the end of its tail. The animal grew to a length of 25 feet and may have weighed five tons.

**Camarasaurus**

Camarasaurus was a large, heavy-bodied, plant-eating dinosaur with a short skull, blunt snout and long neck and tail. Camarasaurus was a member of the Sauropod suborder (the largest of the plant-eating dinosaurs), although it was not as big as some sauropods.. Camarasaurus grew to a length of about 50 feet and its four pillar-like legs may have supported a weight of up to 18 tons. Camarasaurus is one of the dinosaurs most commonly found in the Morrison Formation.

**Camptosaurus**

Camptosaurus was a medium-sized plant-eating dinosaur. It grew to a length of about 20 feet and weighed around 1600 pounds. Hoof-like claws on the fingers and toes suggest that Camptosaurus was nimble and fast, and sometimes walked on all fours.

**Mill Canyon and the Old Copper Mill** On the south side of the canyon you can view the remnants of an old copper mill. Copper ores (azurite and malachite) exposed along the Moab Fault were mined and processed here in the late 1800s. Limited quantities of ore and fluctuating prices probably made the venture economically unfeasible and the mill was abandoned.

**Halfway Stage Station** The remains of the Halfway Stage Station are located to the east of the dinosaur Trail. The Halfway Stage Station served the traveling public between Moab and the railroad line at Thompson. The first passenger train went through Thompson to Salt Lake in April of 1883. The railroad was 35 miles from Moab. The trip via stage coach from Moab to the train station took eight hours, so travelers stopped at the station for lunch. Slower freight wagons spent the night at the station as part of a two day trip. To reach the stage station, go back toward U.S. Highway 191. At the first intersection turn right (see the sign "Halfway Stage Station") and proceed to a wash. Turn right on the jeep route (at a second sign) at the wash crossing and continue for 200 yards to the Stage Station.

The Mill Canyon Dinosaur Trail is a bold experiment; there are no guards or fences here. You, the visitor, are the protector of this valuable resource. It is illegal to remove, deface, or destroy improvements, rocks, and fossils.

BLM—Moab Field Office

# Mill Canyon Dinosaur Trail—Driving Directions

Canyon Country District
82 East Dogwood
Moab, Utah 84532

Phone: (435) 259-2100